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The comparison of students and educators preferred teaching styles in teacher educating centres

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Abstract

With regard to the great importance of teaching styles in student-teachers' education process and their future teaching methods, this study aimed to investigate student-teachers and their educators' preferred teaching styles among active and inactive teaching styles in a teacher education center named Shahid Hashemi-nejad Teacher Education Center, located in Mashhad, Iran. Using Morgan's formula, 85 (including 9 educators and 76 student-teachers) were randomly selected among all 70 educators and 200 student-teachers (N= 270) in this centre. They were asked to complete "preferred teaching style questionnaire". The questionnaire included 39 Likert type items regarding active and inactive teaching styles. The results showed that there were no significantly differences between student-teachers and educators' dispositions towards active and inactive teaching styles. These two groups had relatively similar views on the components of teaching styles in both active and inactive ones and both groups preferred active teaching style to inactive one. Then, some motivating factors are needed for developing active teaching styles.

Keywords: active teaching style, inactive teaching style, Iran, teacher education

1. Introduction

Revising and restructuring teacher education curricula is in the top of educational reform, because teachers and their educating styles and methods are of main factors for measuring education quality and reform, in general. Considering essential and new changes in teacher role and teachers' duties and responsibilities in our age that increasingly changes, we should reform teacher education curricula. Besides, the higher quality of these curricula will cause to improve learners' educational level and quality (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos and Stephenson, 2000). Then, a main goal of teacher education is to educate highly competent and skilful teachers by applying appropriate curricula and styles. Such curricula and styles should and will result in student-teachers' ability to learn problem solving skills and so on which are necessary for successful teaching for their future learners. Student-teachers should practice teaching by practical teaching approaches and active teaching styles that result in their teaching improvement, their engagement in effective activities and learning of how to effectively reflect upon situations, all are of main successful teaching skills. They must learn these skills in teacher education centres during their training courses by applying new teaching styles. In the 21th century, reforming teacher education curricula and encouraging teachers to better teach are of priorities of most countries' education systems throughout the world. If high competent and skilful teacher conceived as a teacher who can applied theoretical knowledge in teaching rather than absolutely having theoretical knowledge (Karamustafaoglu, 2009), some related problems have been considered on what competences they learn and how they learn these competences and what they need to learn. The latter one is regarded in teaching skills.

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What teachers learn regularly is acquired by some resources: their school education background as past students, teacher education curricula presented to them and their practical teaching experiences. Some experimental and observed evidences showed that teachers tend to repeat what they learn about learning and teach what they have learnt during their student periods. Also, self-thinking and regulating own teaching method is a means of their occupational achievement. However, the acceptance of the existence of various resources and environments for learning teachers necessitates the acceptance of multi-dimensional teacher education curricula and a teaching style which accords with them (Loughran, 2009). Bax (2010) argues that if teacher apprentices actively involve in learning process, they will learn better, and if they encounter various and contradictory viewpoints, they will reflect better. This shows the importance of student-teachers' learning process in teacher education centres and what they are taught affects both their teaching and their beliefs in teaching. This highlights the importance of *teaching styles* educators select for teaching them. Teacher education needs to understand the complexity of teaching process, its effect on learning how to teach and development of teaching knowledge in teaching environments (Loughran, 2009). By their personal experiences, student-teachers learn not only curriculum subjects, but also the methods of teaching the subjects. The teacher education curricula should not ignore this aspect and it should be interested in teaching the qualities needed for these subjects. The teacher's performances in classes and teaching environments are affected by their views on teaching, their preferred teaching styles, their beliefs in syllabuses, their knowledge on subjects, their ability to manage and control, their personal characteristics, their understanding of conditions, teaching background and their teaching behaviour (Ayati, Attaran and Mehrmohammadi, 2001). Then, teacher education curricula should present student-teachers with the opportunities such as workshops, seminars and practices in which they can directly observed students in their various economic, social and cultural, local and lingual statuses and analyse their learning process, evaluate their views on social problems and trace their continuous development in natural settings (National Council for Teacher Education, 2009).

Teaching style applied in educational environments affects all aforementioned affairs and performances. Yüksel (2008) defined teaching style as educators' behaviours in class and teaching environments. Teaching style is defined as educators or teachers' general model for behaviours in class, their common behaviours and permanent characteristics in teaching and their teaching methods and roles in different educational conditions. Researchers divide teaching styles into some categories including among others formal versus informal, explanatory versus exploratory, and active versus inactive (Opdenakker and VanDamme, 2006). Active and inactive teaching styles have been heavily considered in related literature. The former is learner-centered and focuses on students' active participation in learning process and educators, as directors try to well communicate with learners and consider their personal differences but the latter emphasizes on curriculum content and memorization, and educators, as absolute knower ignore student-teachers' differences and active participation in class discussions. Tsai (2002) argues that active teaching style is learner oriented which respects learners' decisions and views and group thinking, and inactive one acts as a transmission approach to teaching and conceives educator as a person who determines teaching techniques without consideration of learners' needs and abilities with a great emphasis on textbooks and approved curricula. With regard to the great importance of teaching styles in student-teachers' education process, this study aimed to investigate student-teachers and their educators' preferred teaching styles among active and inactive styles in a teacher education center named Shahid Hashemi-nejad Teacher Education Center located in Mashhad, Iran (here, The Centre). 3 research questions were considered:

- 1- What is educators' preferred teaching style in The Centre?
- 2- What is student-teachers' preferred teaching style in The Centre?
- 3- Is there any significant difference between these two groups' preferred teaching styles?

2. Method

Using Morgan's formula, we randomly selected 85 (including 9 educators and 76 student-teachers) from all 70 educators and 200 student-teachers (N= 270) in Shahid Hashemi-Nejad Teacher Education Center (here, The Center). They were asked to complete "preferred teaching style questionnaire" designed by Mousa-pour (1998) who used it to evaluate the "teaching method and techniques" Lesson. Some ignorable changes were made in this questionnaire. The questionnaire included 39 Likert type items regarding active and inactive teaching styles. Each item included 6 options from "completely" (with scale of 5) to "at all" (with scale of 0). The items involved 4

components named "making communication" (with 5 items), "continuing communication" (with 14 items), "effective communication" (with 10 items) and "evaluating communication" (with 10 items). The validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by some experts in education field and its stability was measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As shown in table 1, the coefficient was measured for all the items, components and teaching styles. Except the component of "making communication" perhaps due to its related few items in the questionnaire, all other components had high alpha coefficient in the teaching styles in overall and amounted to 0.94. Independent t-test and paired sample t-test were used for data analysis.

Table 1. Measured Cronbach's alpha for the components in active and inactive teaching styles

Component Alpha	Inactive teaching style	Active teaching style
Making communication	0.35	0.53
Continuing communication	0.82	0.90
Effective communication	0.79	0.87
Evaluating communication	0.85	0.86

3. Results

As table 2 shows, there were no significant differences between student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "making communication" related to inactive teaching style ($t = -0.242$, $p > 0.05$) from one hand and active teaching style ($t = -0.035$, $p > 0.05$) from the other hand.

Table2. The results of independent t-test for comparing student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "making communication" of inactive and active teaching styles

Component	Group	M	Sd. E	t	df	P value
Making communication in inactive teaching skills	Student-teacher	21.08	1.04506	-0.242	82	0.810
	Educator	21.33				
Making communication in active teaching skills	Student-teacher	24.29	1.18417	-0.035	82	0.972
	Educator	24.33				

As table 3 shows, there were no significant differences between student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "continuing communication" related to inactive teaching style ($t = 0.015$, $p > 0.05$) from one hand and active teaching style ($t = -0.150$, $p > 0.05$) from the other hand.

Table3. The results of independent t-test for comparing student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "continuing communication" of inactive and active teaching styles

Component	Group	M	Sd. E	t	df	P
Continuing communication in inactive teaching styles	Student-teacher	51.44	3.14156	0.015	82	0.988
	Educator	51.40				
Continuing communication in active teaching styles	Student-teacher	63.72	3.70273	-0.150	82	0.881
	Educator	64.28				

As table 4 shows, there were no significant differences between student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "effective communication" related to inactive teaching style ($t = 0.627$, $p > 0.05$) from one hand and active teaching style ($t = -0.021$, $p > 0.05$) from the other hand.

Table4. The results of independent t-test for comparing student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "effective communication" of inactive and active teaching styles

Component	Group	M	Sd. E	t	df	P
Effective communication in inactive teaching styles	Student-teacher	37.17	2.57787	0.627	82	0.533
	Educator	35.55				
Effective communication in active teaching styles	Student-teacher	37.17	2.85769	-0.021	82	0.984
	Educator	35.55				

As table 5 shows, there were no significant differences between student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "evaluating communication" related to inactive teaching style ($t = 0.491$, $p > 0.05$) from one hand and active teaching style ($t = 0.188$, $p > 0.05$) from the other hand.

Table5. The results of independent t-test for comparing student-teachers and educators' viewpoints on the component of "evaluating communication" of inactive and active teaching styles

Component	Group	M	Sd. E	t	df	P
Evaluating communication in inactive teaching styles	Student-teacher	37.46	2.98857	0.491	82	0.625
	Educator	36.00				
Evaluating communication in active teaching styles	Student-teacher	46.95	2.70328	0.188	82	0.851
	Educator	46.44				

A paired sample t-test was done for comparing student-teachers and educators' preferred teaching styles. As shown in table 6, the mean of student-teachers' dispositions towards active teaching style was significantly higher than their dispositions towards inactive teaching style in all four components ($p = 0.0000$). In other words, they preferred active teaching style.

Table 6. the intra-group comparison of the means of student-teachers' preferred teaching styles

Component	Teaching styles	M	SD	Sd.E	t	df	P
Making communication	inactive	21.08	3.05	.35	-6.52	74	0.000***
	active	24.29	3.46	.40			
Continuing communication	inactive	51.44	8.96	1.03	-8.30	74	0.000***
	active	63.72	3.05	1.34			
Effective communication	inactive	37.17	3.05	.83	-7.37	74	0.000***
	active	46.26	8.96	.94			
Evaluating communication	inactive	37.46	10.79	.96	-7.81	74	0.000***
	active	46.95	7.25	.87			

*** $P < 0.001$

As shown in table 7, the mean of educators' dispositions towards active teaching style was significantly higher than their dispositions towards inactive teaching style in all components ($p < 0.05$), except that of "evaluating communication". In other words, they relatively preferred active teaching style.

Table 7. the intra-group comparison of the means of educators' preferred teaching styles

Component	Teaching styles	M	SD	Sd.E	t	df	P
Making communication	inactive	21.33	8.16	.64	-2.92	8	0.019*
	active	24.33	8.36	.70			
Continuing communication	inactive	51.4	7.59	2.79	-3.02	8	0.016*
	active	64.28	7.21	2.40			
Effective communication	inactive	35.55	7.77	2.59	-2.54	8	0.034*
	active	46.32	7.48	2.49			
Evaluating communication	inactive	36.00	9.42	3.14	-1.95	8	0.086
	active	46.44	8.23	2.74			

*P<0.05

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Regarding the research questions 1 and 2, the results showed that there were no significant differences between student-teachers and educators' dispositions towards active and inactive teaching styles. These two groups had relatively similar views on the components of teaching styles in both active and inactive ones. Then, in response to the research question 3, it can be said that both groups preferred active teaching style to inactive one.

As Sheykh-zadeh and Samari (2010) found, educators who preferred active teaching style had more research activities and demonstrated good relations with their students than educators with inactive teaching style. Student-teachers and educators may well be aware of the priorities and strengths of active teaching style and prefer it to that of inactive one. This shows the importance of designing appropriate curricula in teacher education centres and training educators the methods of active learning. Despite the results of our study, Pakseresht (2004) reported that the studied educators preferred inactive teaching style. One of the main reasons for this contradiction may be that, as Maroufi et al (2007) argued, some other factors affect preferred teaching styles including among others the education environment, designed curricula and syllabuses and so on.

Besides, as the study of Eskandari and Salehi (2009) found in a study on student-teachers' preferred teaching styles, considering the preferences of student-teachers in teaching style can improve their academic performances and future teaching activities.

Some studies focus on the importance of holding several workshops and training courses for identifying and explaining the methods and techniques of teaching in different teaching styles (e.g. Nouhi, Haghdoust and Faraj-zadeh, 2002). Making student-teachers to be aware of the complexity of teaching can help them to select appropriate teaching styles (Kennedy, 1999). These have some implications for the necessity of introducing modern and effective teaching styles.

In conclusion, some suggestions can be predicted based on our research findings. As the student-teachers and educators in The Centre prefer active or learner-based teaching style, educators should be motivated to select this style by holding related training workshops and courses and assigning some privileges for educators with active teaching style-Introducing student-teachers to various teaching styles and including some general syllabuses in their curricula about these styles are effective for increasing their dispositions towards active teaching style. The main limitation of current study and other related studies was that identification of teaching styles is a complex activity and is not so simple as completing certain questionnaire and analyzing collected data. The actual teaching style educators apply in their classes need accurate observation of their teaching in class environments and educators' self assessment. However, despite an especial centre was regarded in this study, but the domination of similar background situations in relation to student-teacher, educators and curricula in Iran can weaken the limitation of generalization of the findings.

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